THE QUR'AN AND ITS WISDOM

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The Qur'an and Its Wisdom

The Qur'an is the greatest gift of God to humanity and its wisdom is of a unique kind. Briefly stated, the purpose of the Book is to guard the previous revelations and restore the eternal truth of God, to guide humanity to the Straight Path and quicken the soul of man, to awaken the human conscience and enlighten the human mind.

The Qur'an is the Word of God revealed to Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) through the Holy Spirit Gabriel, and it is beyond human imagination to produce anything like it. Muhammad's (S.A.W.) contemporaries were, by proclamation, the greatest masters of the Arabic language with most compelling motives to produce a rival text. But they could not produce anything like the Qur'an in content or style. Muhammad (S.A.W.) had no formal schooling and he made no secret of it. It is his greatest credit that he was an illiterate man rising from among illiterate people to teach the whole of mankind, literate and illiterate alike, the true message of God. This is the first fact about the Qur'an being the Word of God.

The second fact about this unique Book is the unquestionable authenticity of its contents and

order, a quality which no other book of any kind has ever enjoyed or is likely to enjoy. The authenticity of the Qur'an leaves no doubt as to the purity, originality and totality of its text. Serious scholars, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, have concluded, beyond doubt, that the Qur'an we use today is the very same Book which Muhammad (S.A.W.) received, taught, lived by and beqneathed to humanity almost fourteen centuries ago. Some observations may illustrate this unexemplified authenticity of the Qur'an.

1. The Qur'an was revealed in portions and piecemeal, but it was never without some form of order and arrangement. The name of the Qur'an indicates that it was a Book from the very beginning (Qur'an, 2:2; 41:41-42). The arrangements of the Qur'an and the gradual revelation of its passages were the plans and Will of God, a will by which Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his Companions abided (25:32; cf. 75:17).

2. The Arabs were distinguished by their extremely refined literary taste that enabled them to enjoy and appreciate the good pieces of literature. The Qur'an, by acclamation, was to their taste the most outstanding masterpiece of literature. They were moved by its touching tone and attracted to its extraordinary beauty. They found in it the greatest satisfaction and the deepest joy, and they embarked

ı a course of recitation and memorization of the ook. It was, and still is, admired, quoted and erished by all Muslims and many non-Muslims.

It is incumbent upon every Muslim, man and oman, to recite a portion of the Qur'an every day in ayer and during the night vigilance. Recitation of e Qur'an is to the Muslims a high form of worship id a daily practice.

The Arabs were generally illiterate people and ad to rely completely on their memories to preserve ie poems and passages they liked most. They were istinguished for their sharp memories in which they ored their literary legacy. The Qur'an was cknowledged by all people of literary taste to be imitable. So they hastened to commit it to their iemories but only in the most remarkable and espectful manner.

. During the lifetime of Muhammad (S.A.W.), iere were expert scribes and appointed recorders of ne Revelations. Whenever he received a verse or a assage, he immediately instructed his scribes to ecord it under his supervision. Whatever they ecorded was checked and authenticated by the Prophet himself. Every word was reviewed and every assage was put in its right order.

). By the time Revelations were completed, the Muslims were in possession of many complete

records of the Qur'an. They were recited, memorized, studied and used for all daily purposes. Whenever a difference arose, the matter was referred to the Prophet himself to settle the issue, whether it was connected with the text or the meaning or the intonation.

7. After the death of Muhammad (S.A.W.), the Qur'an was already committed to many Muslim memories and numerous recording tablets. But even that did not satisfy Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, who was afraid that the death of large numbers of memorizers in battles might lead to serious confusion about the Qur'an. So he consulted the leading authorities and then entrusted Zayd Ibn Thabit, Muhammad's (S.A.W.) Chief Scribe of Revelations, to compile a standard and complete copy of the Book in the same order as authorized by Muhammad (S.A.W.) himself. He did that under the supervision of the Companions of the Prophet and with their help. The final and complete version was checked and approved by all Muslims who heard the Qur'an from Muhammad (S.A.W.) and committed it to their memories and hearts. This was done less that two years after Muhammad's (S.A.W.) death. Revelations were still fresh and alive in the minds of scribes, memorizers and other Muslim Companions of the Prophet.

8. During the Caliphate of 'Uthman, about fifteen

years after Muhammad (S.A.W.), the compiled copies of the Qur'an were distributed widely in the new territories which came into contact with Islam. Most of the inhabitants did not see Muhammad (S.A.W.) or hear him. Due to regional and geographical factors, they were reading the Qur'an with slightly different accents. Differences in recitation and intonation began to arise and cause disputes among Muslims. 'Uthman acted swiftly to meet the situation. After mutual consultation with all the leading authorities, he formed a committee of four men made up of the former Scribes of Revelations. All the copies in use were collected and replaced by One Standard Copy which was to be used according to the accent and dialect of Quraysh, the very same dialect and accent of Muhammad (S.A.W.) himself. That dialect was adopted and standardized because it was the best of all dialects and the one in which the Qur'an was revealed. Thus, the Qur'an was again restricted to the accent and dialect of the man who received it. And from that time onwards, the same standardized version has been in use without the slightest change in words or order or even punctuation marks.

From these observations, scholars have concluded that the Qur'an stands today as it first came down, and as it always will be. To it there has never been any addition; from it there was no omission; and, in it there occurred no corruption. Its history is as clear

as daylight; its authenticity is unquestionable; and its complete preservation is beyond doubt.

The Qur'an is full of unexemplified wisdom with regard to its source, its characteristics and its dimensions. The wisdom of the Qur'an derives from the wisdom of the author who could not have been any other than God himself. It also derives from the compelling power of the Book which is inimitable and which is a challenge to all men of letters and knowledge. The realistic approach of the Qur'an, the practical solutions it offers to human problems and the noble objectives it sets for man mark the Qur'anic wisdom as being of a special nature and characteristics.

Dynamism

One of the major characteristics of the Qur'anic wisdom is that it is not the static or dry type. It is a kind of dynamic wisdom that provokes the mind and quickens the heart. In this wisdom there is stirring dynamism and there is moving force attested by historical evidence as well as by the Qur'an itself. When Muhammad (S.A.W.) first launched the Call of God, his only power was the Qur'an and his only wisdom was the Qur'anic wisdom. The penetrating dynamism of the Qur'an is tremendous and irresistible.

There are numerous examples to show that the most dynamic personalities and the most conclusive

arguments could not reach the realm of the dynamic wisdom of the Qur'an. God speaks of the Qur'an as a Rooh or spirit and life, and as a light wherewith the servants of God are guided to the Straight Path (42:52). Again, He says: Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, verily you would have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of God. Such are the similarities which We propound to men, that they may reflect (59:21). The key words here are Rooh and Sad', which mean that Qur'an originates life, quickens the soul, radiates the guiding light and moves the seemingly immobile objects. This is the kind of spiritual dynamism of which the Qur'an speaks.

Practicability

Another significant characteristic of the Qur'an is its practicability. It does not indulge in wishful thinking. Nor do its teachings demand the impossible or float on rosy streams of unattainable ideals. The Qur'an accepts man for what he is and exhorts him to become what he can be. It does not brand man as a helpess creature, condemned from birth to death, and drowned in sin from womb to tomb, but it portrays him as a noble, honourable and dignified being.

The practicability of the Qur'anic teachings is established by the examples of Muhammad (S.A.W.) and Muslims throughout the ages. The

distinctive approach of the Qur'an is that its instructions are aimed at the general welfare of man and are based on the possibilities within his reach.

Moderation

A third characteristic is moderation or harmony between the Divine and the human, the spiritual and the material, the individual and the collective, and so on. The Qur'an pays due attention to all facts of life and all needs of man, and deals with them in such a way as to help man to realize the noble objectives of his being. For this approach of moderation, the Qur'an calls the Muslims a Middle Nation (2:143), and with this "middleness" they are called the best people ever evolved for mankind; as they enjoin the right, combat the wrong and believe in God (3:110).

The Qur'anic wisdom functions in three principal dimensions: inwardly, outwardly and upwardly. Inwardly it penetrates into the innermost recesses of the heart and reaches the farthest depths of the mind. It is aimed at the healthy cultivation of the individual from within. This inward penetration is different from and far deeper than that of any other legal or ethical system, because the Qur'an speaks in God's name and refers all matters to Him.

The outward function of the Qur'an embraces all walks of life and covers the principles of the entire field of human affairs from the most personal matters to the complex international relations. The

Qur'an reaches areas unknown to any secular system of law or code of ethics and inaccessible to any popular doctrine of religion. What is remarkable about the Qur'an in this respect is that it deals with human transactions in such a way as to give them a Divine flavour and a moral touch. It makes the presence of God felt in every transaction and acknowledges Him as the first source of guidance and the ultimate goal of all transactions. It is man's spiritual guide, his system of law, his code of ethics and, above all, his way of life.

In its upward function the Qur'an focuses on the One Supreme God. Everything that was, or that is, or that will be, must be channelled into and seen through this focus, the active presence of God in the universe. Man is merely a trustee in the vast domain of God, and the sole purpose of his creation is to worship God. This is no pretext for seclusion or passive retirement from life. It is an open invitation to man to be the true embodiment on earth of the excellent qualities of God. When the Qur'an in its upward attention focuses on God, it opens before man new horizons of thought, guides him to unexemplified standards of high morality, and acquaints him with the eternal source of peace and goodness. Realising God alone as the ultimate goal of man is a revolution against the popular trends in human thought and religious doctrines, a revolution whose objective is to free the mind from doubt,

liberate the soul from sin and emancipate the conscience from subjugation.

In all its dimensions the Qur'anic wisdom is conclusive. It neither condemns nor tortures the flesh nor does it neglect the soul. It does no "humanize" God nor does it deify man. Everything i carefully placed where it belongs in the total schem of creation. There is proportionate relationshi between deeds and rewards, between means an ends. The Qur'anic wisdom is not neutral. It i demanding and its demands are joyfully welcome by all those blessed with appreciation an understanding.

The wisdom of the Qur'an calls for truth i thought and piety in action, for unity in purpose an goodwill in intent. That is the Book; in it is guidanc sure, without doubt .....(2:2). This is a Book whic We have revealed unto you, in order that you migl lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into ligl .... (14:2)